

NYSOA Meeting in Review

By Linda Orkin

It was hard to believe that the NYSOA meeting was actually going to happen until the final version of the booklet was off to the printer. Everything else we had done up to then: registering with the Ramada for rooms and banquet, choosing and securing Bridget Stutchbury as our keynote speaker, receiving enthusiastic permission from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology to hold our Friday night reception there and hiring Cornell Catering to feed us there, establishing a schedule for the weekend and getting our registration form up on our website, putting out the call for papers and posters, organizing a large group of field trip leaders, gathering donated items for our silent auction, and soliciting the wonderfully supportive club for all the necessary volunteer help—seemed like just an exercise in possibilities rather than preparation for an event that was actually going to happen. Then suddenly, thanks so much to Anne Marie Johnson, we had print materials, name tags, program booklets, signs pointing the way to events; and we were stuffing folders that had real registrants names on them and putting name tags with event icons in the folders; and the reality hit all of us who had spent more than two years in the planning—in one week almost 150 people would be flocking to the Cayuga Bird Club's hosting of the New York State Ornithological Association's annual meeting.

Friday saw the start of registration at the Ramada with a steady stream of attendees from the moment we began. I was sitting at the table where we had both of our books for sale, kitty-cornered to the field trip sign-up table; and it was really fun to see people rushing in to put their names down for our extensive offering of local trips. There were several walks scheduled for Friday at 3p.m. that were going to Sapsucker Woods and Stewart Park, and people were eager to start their weekend with some birding excursions. Of course, everyone wanted to know where they "would see warblers." Even experienced birders wish for a sure thing.



Hors d'oeuvres at the lab, Oh my!

A majority of our guests had registered for the Friday night reception at the Lab of Ornithology and everyone was delighted with how lovely and festive the Visitors' Center looked, thanks to blue Hydrangeas, bird pictures,



A lecture by Mya Thompson

crow fabrics and other suitable decorations, and five wonderful stations of delicious hearty hors d'oeuvres, desserts, and drinks. Cornell Catering took care of us in style. Mya Thompson had graciously agreed to deliver two short presentations exploring *All About Bird Biology*, which focused on their newest launch about bird song. We were also able to show an inspiring film, *Inside the Lab*, after each of Mya's ten-minute segments. Robyn Bailey and Jody Enck had each volunteered to lead a back of the house tour, and we owe much gratitude to Matt Medler who agreed to stay on through the evening and introduce people to Macaulay Library, a perfect highlight. People ate, drank, and socialized until the end at 9; and all agreed it had been a wonderful evening. The beautiful weather certainly added to the good



Matt Medler with group in Macaulay Library

mood, and the changing light on the pond was a dramatic backdrop.

Saturday started with field trips, the delegates leaving by 7 a.m. and all others leaving by 7:30 a.m. Meanwhile, inside the hotel, registration continued and ongoing excitement was provided by bidding in our silent auction. Many of you may not be aware that Wild Birds Unlimited at Sapsucker Woods donated a very expensive pair of Nikon EDG binoculars to be the highlight of our auction, and a bidding war kept many of us going in to check the sheet to see which bid was on top. We ended up auctioning this pair off for \$1,250, and we were very happy to do so. We had nineteen other items donated by club members. There were prints of Marie Read's photographs donated by Marie, prints of artwork by Karen Allaben Confer donated by Donna Scott, birdhouses and feeders donated by David Fitch, a cheese wheel

donated by the Cornell Dairy, books donated by Paul Anderson, Donna Scott, and Richard and Cyndy Tkachuck, wine donated by various members, lab memberships donated by the lab, varied offerings that made for a fun auction. All items went for more than their minimum bid, and it was a fun activity that engaged everyone's attention. Bidding ended at 3:30 p.m., as announced by Colleen, and the results would be kept secret until announced at that evening's banquet.

The afternoon was devoted to paper presentations offered by the following researchers: Shailee Shah, Truth Muller, Nicholas A. Mason, Steven Houck and Christopher Klee, Max Pine, Andrew Johnson, and Kerri Dikun. The session was moderated by Kevin McGowan and was very well attended with the room that seats about 150 being full for most of the time. Posters were on view for the afternoon and during the break at 3 p.m. the posters' authors were available for discussion. These authors were Taylor Heaton



Poster presentations

Crisolongo; Leah Nettle; Anna L. Schatz; R. W. Rohrbaugh et al; Linda C. Ziemba, Jim Eckler, and Scott Stipetich; and Sara Gonzalez. We are very grateful for such high quality and professional participation.

The cocktail hour at 5:30 was followed immediately by the banquet, buffet style, and set the stage for the awards, presentations, and speaker for the evening. Paul Anderson, our president, welcomed everyone and reminded us all that the Cayuga Bird Club was celebrating its hundred year anniversary. Then, Kathryn Schneider, president of NYSOA, took the podium and presented the awards as follows:



The banquet provided good food and a chance to greet old friends and make new ones.

NYSOA's highest award, the Gordon M. Meade Award for Distinguished Service, was presented to Andrew Mason for his outstanding leadership and service to the organization. Over the last 10 years Andy has served as President, Vice President, Treasurer, Director, and Conservation Chair. As Conservation Chair, he and his committee have researched many important conservation issues and advocated well-articulated positions to protect the birds of New York State.



Kathy Schneider presenting Andy Mason the Gordon M. Meade Award

Barbara Butler was honored with a President's Award for her many years of service to NYSOA. Barbara was one of the first directors of NYSOA, serving in that position for six years. After a three-year hiatus, she returned to take on the position of Circulation Manager for another six years. Despite the additional workload, Barbara cheerfully managed the membership database during the transition from paper to email distribution of *New York Birders*.

Marc Katz, a young birder from New York City, received the Lillian C. Stoner Award. He was nominated by the both the Linnaean Society of New York and the New York State Young Birders Club to receive this prestigious recognition, which includes a framed certificate, a one-year membership in NYSOA, and a cash award to help offset the cost of attending the annual meeting.



Mark Katz receiving the Lillian C. Stoner Award from Kevin Griffith

The John J. Elliott Award, which includes a plaque and a monetary prize, was given to Kyle Wright for the best article published in *The Kingbird* in 2013. His research on "Timing of the spring passage of dark Red-tailed Hawks past Derby Hill Bird Observatory" was published in Vol. 63, No. 3, March 2013.

Certificates of Appreciation went to Tom and Wendy Weaver of Point Peninsula for their hospitality to birders who came to their property to see the Willow Ptarmigan last winter, to members of the Town Board of Lansing for creating a natural area and bird habitat at Salt Point in the Town of Lansing, and to retiring *New York Birders* editors, Cyndy and Richard Tkachuck, who transitioned the newsletter to a beautiful online color format and published it for two years. A special Certificate of Appreciation featuring the New York State Birders Conference logo went to the Cayuga Bird Club with sincere thanks for hosting the fantastic 2014 annual meeting.

Congratulations and applause accompanied all of these announcements.



NYSOA President Kathy Schnider presenting Donna Scott and Linda Orkin a certificate of appreciation for being the co-chairs of the conference.

The presentation of the awards was followed by our knowledgeable and lucid keynote speaker, Bridget Stutchbury PhD, whose talk was titled “Frequent Fliers: New Discoveries in Bird Migration” and summarized her own research tracking migration of several species using geolocators. It is always both enlightening and tantalizing to have some mechanics and miracle of migration revealed, and this night was no exception.

The meeting was adjourned and the crowd left satisfied, with only Sunday’s field trips remaining to round out the weekend. I feel compelled to include an email sent by Carena Pooth, Vice-president of NYSOA and chair for the Young Birders group. She said: “Congratulations to you and the entire committee on a fantastic conference! Everyone I’ve talked to about it has raved about it! Everything was so well organized, the food was excellent (CREAM PUFFS at the lab, OMG!!!), and the field trips and speakers made for a really wonderful birder’s itinerary! Thank you so much for all your hard work to make it happen and to make sure it all went without a hitch. It was a really class act.”

I cannot end without acknowledging the club and its members, especially the steering committee. Donna Scott liked to emphasize that she and I were co-chairs, but she was the real steerer in her many roles as organizer, proofreader, protocol, keeping in touch with all partners including NYSOA, the Cayuga Bird Club, and our many volunteers. She was a true leader to all of us. Colleen Richards was our main liaison with the hotel and with the Ithaca tourist board, making

all decisions and recommendations for the logistics at the hotel. In addition, she took full charge of and responsibility



Bridget Stutchbury, keynote speaker

for the silent auction. Susan Danskin, what would we ever do without her expertise as our treasurer and registrar? It is so reassuring to have her monitoring all of the activities and keeping us all on track. What a big task. Paul Anderson, as our webmaster, did a masterful job of getting our on-line registration up and running and adding whatever we needed or wanted to our website. Laura Stenzler, Marie Read, and Kevin McGowan were responsible for soliciting papers and posters and ended up with wonderful offerings. Marie Read was in charge of approaching Bridget to be our speaker, making all of her arrangements and acting as her host. Bob McGuire was in charge of organizing field trips, soliciting leaders and selecting the destinations, making up the master check list, and keeping it all running smoothly. Anne Marie Johnson, our club expert on layout and design, put in countless hours composing our program, name tags and all other print materials. Other club members who volunteered and kept everything running smoothly were Becky Hansen, Richard and Cyndy Tkachuck, Klaus Apel, Candace Cornell, David Fitch, Loretta Heimbuch, Deborah Lynn, Lissa Mobley, Bobbie Monroe, Diane Morton, Chris Pelkie, Pat Pryor, Meg Richardson, and Jae Sullivan. We could not have pulled this off without all of our dedicated participation. I congratulate us all and declare this final activity in our Cayuga Bird Club Centennial Year to be a TOTAL SUCCESS!!